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DE RUEHBI #0547/01 3321940
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O P 271940Z NOV 08
FM AMCONSUL MUMBAI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6751
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 7989
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 1913
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 1737
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 1942
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 0810
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
RUEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MUMBAI 000547

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DS/ER/CC
DS FRONT OFFICE
DS/IP/SCA
DS/DSS/ITA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [IN](#)
SUBJECT: SITREP 3: MUMBAI TERRORIST ATTACKS - SECURITY FORCES PREPARE
FOR DENOUEMENT, AS GUESTS TRICKLE OUT

REF: MUMBAI 546

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11. (SBU) At 5 pm, the Consul General, A/RSO, and Acting PAO visited the Oberoi/Trident, Taj Palace Hotel, and Nariman (Chabad) House sites to gauge the response and strategy of the paramilitary and police forces in dealing with the hostage situations. Despite an army and police cordon, the CG's convoy moved with ease through the streets. Thousands of onlookers and media representatives thronged the perimeter around the hotels. CG saw one foreigner who had been released from the Oberoi/Trident walking alone, disheveled, and bewildered along the road, followed by a swarm of media asking for comments.

12. (SBU) At Nariman (Chabad) House, the police commanding officer told the CG that the four hostages inside were dead. An Israeli-American, Gavriel Holtzberg, his Israeli wife, Rikvah, and another American, Laiby Titelbaum, may have been killed. (Note: Due to the continuing police operations at this site, it is unclear when these reported deaths can be confirmed. End Note.) The Holtzberg's young son, Moshe, is safe and staying with a family friend. The police commander told the CG that he was preparing to storm the building and eliminate the terrorists.

13. (SBU) At the Trident/Oberoi, the police commander told the CG that the National Security Guard (NSG) forces continue to clear the building slowly, floor by floor, in order to minimize casualties. The RSO team reported that when floors are cleared, police are bringing evacuated guests to the nearby Air India building for triage. RSO reports that the Trident has now been completely evacuated. Around 8 pm, several fires broke out at the Oberoi and Congenoffs on the scene report that there is at least one American trapped in the hotel spa, while others remain on the upper floors. Two Americans have been taken to hospitals and treated for gunshot wounds. It is still believed that at least two hostage takers are still controlling the upper floors with AK-47s, with an estimated 20-30 hostages of unknown nationalities. The Oberoi management has been confined outside the perimeter since last night, and have not been able to provide the Consulate information about guests, nationalities,

or conditions inside the hotel.

¶4. (SBU) At the Taj Mahal Hotel, the CG was not able to approach the building due to security concerns, including reports of continued firefights. Police now believe that there is one terrorist left in the hotel, and the Legatt representative at the site reported that that clearing operations continue slowly floor-by-floor. According to Legatt, the Tower Wing has been cleared, but operations are ongoing in the historic Heritage wing, which has been severely damaged. Most of the guests have been evacuated from the Taj, but media reports that there may be 60-80 casualties at the hotel; the wife and two Amcits children of the General Manager of the Taj, K.S. Kang, are believed to have been killed. At the moment, Legatt reports that there is no specific information going into or coming out of the Taj about hostages or guests. Legatt has also provided the police on location with a list of Amcits and their believed locations inside the hotel.

¶5. (SBU) In New Delhi, the Charge d'Affairs discussed the situation with Gayatri Kumar, Ministry for External Affairs Joint Secretary for the Americas, and specifically raised the issue of FBI investigative support. New Delhi will follow-up with a formal request to the GoI to allow FBI and USG security and law enforcement assistance personnel into India. CONS New Delhi is forwarding text for a proposed Travel Alert for India and would continue to coordinate with CMS taskforce on CSI edits and changes.

Casualties

¶6. (SBU) The Consular section now presumes four Americans have been killed. Seventeen evacuated Amcits are now at the Taj President with a Consular team, and another team has been dispatched to provide assistance to 12 Amcits at the Wellington

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Mews, another Taj property. Teams have also been sent to hospital morgues to identify possible Amcits. We will update as soon as more info becomes available.

The Blame Game Begins

¶7. (SBU) As the crisis reaches its climax, the news media has begin to blame the usual culprits for the attacks, and the Indian government for its response. Prime Minister Singh claimed that "external forces" are responsible for the attacks, and vowed to take this matter up strongly with "neighboring countries." The media is reporting that at least one of the arrested terrorists is a Pakistani national, and that the terrorists entered Mumbai by boat from Pakistan via Gujarat's Rann of Kutch. One of the suspected terrorists at Nariman House, Imran, called into a Hindi-language television station, demanding "freedom for Kashmir," among other demands as his motivation for the attack. Neither the government nor the police have commented on these reports. CNN-IBN and other networks have also begun to criticize the police and government's response to the terrorist attacks. Given Mumbai's recently history of communal tensions, there will be concerns that Mumbai's citizens, fueled by opportunistic political parties, may take out their anger over this event on local Muslims, though the presence of the Army in the city will likely prevent that from happening for now. In a welcome move, however, upon his arrival in Mumbai this afternoon, an emotional Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader L.K. Advani told the media, "We must unite as Indians to stamp out terrorism."

FOLMSBEE